

HJR 18 Workgroup Meeting

Thursday, July 12, 2012 Minutes

Location: Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference)

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

In Attendance:

Tania M. Culley, Esq. – Co-Chair

The Hon. Barbara Crowell

The Hon. William L. Chapman, Jr.

Nathan Badell

Rep. Michael Barbieri

John Bates

Amanda Brennan

Rodney Brittingham

Jim Flynn

Sherfone Johnson

Christina Jones-Bey

Felicia Kellum

Mike Kopp

Mary Kate McLaughlin

Julie Miller, Esq.

Demetrius Pinder

Susan Radecki

Ethan S.

Ellie Torres

Tasha Warren

Keith Zirkle

Welcome & Introductions

Rodney Brittingham welcomed everyone to the meeting and spoke about how in the next few months this group has the undertaking of creating a developmentally appropriate extended care system. This group will create a “menu of options” for youth who wish to stay in care past their 18th birthday.

Tania Culley had some housekeeping items to address in order to assign tasks to committee members and groups. She discussed the importance of the agendas being posted a week prior to the meetings in order to be compliant with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Julie Miller volunteered to take minutes for the Committee. The committee also agreed that the University of Delaware would complete the background research through the use of a graduate student and staff at the Institute for Public Administration. In addition, budget analysis and report preparation would be completed by the Division of Family Services.

HJR 18 Background and Direction

Tania explained that the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative had formed a Community Partnership Board with several working groups at the beginning of this year. Tania and Julia O’Hanlon were asked to chair the Policy working group, to which they accepted. Through this group, the issue of extending foster care to 21 was addressed. The group, with the help of several youth, wrote a resolution, HJR 18 sponsored by Rep. Michael Barbieri, to form this current committee. Three youth testified, and HJR 18 was passed in both the House and Senate and signed by Governor Markell. This current committee must now decide how extended care will look in Delaware and how much it will cost, all by September 17th. Tania and Julia will continue to be the chairs and direct the group over the next few months.

DYOI Developmentally Appropriate and Individualized Foster Care to Age 21

Julie Miller discussed the importance of developmentally appropriate extended care to 21. Part of that definition, as defined by the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative, includes having the broadest more flexible options of care for older youth. She further explained the need for friendly venues for review of a young person’s case as well as youth directed advocacy. Julie stated that Delaware will be used as a model site for the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, as they embark on a national campaign to extend care to 21. Additionally, she explained that Delaware has put into practice the STEPS plan at 17. This plan allows youth,

about to exit from care, to bring together important people in their lives to plan for the transition to adulthood. Through Jim Casey's developmentally appropriate framework, the Initiative is looking to move this type of planning to 14 years of age.

DSCYF Background, Due Diligence & Estimated Budget

Keith Zirkle was asked to discuss a fiscal analysis the Division of Family Services (DFS) had done in considering the extension of foster care to 21. According to Keith, DFS started to look at the costs to extend in 2010 when the Foster Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed by Congress. He explained that there were two models that have been analyzed:

Model 1

Keith explained that this model was budgeted to look exactly the same as foster care to 18, but extended up to age 21. Young adults would live with foster families, have the same supervision, same money services, and same independent living services. Requirements would be the same as those of Title IV(e) to get Chaffee dollars. He explained that averaging 115 youth reaching age 18, with 20 cases per caseworker, DFS would need to create nine new positions: six workers, one supervisor, one IV(e) eligible caseworker, and one assistant. Additional costs would include board payments and adoption subsidies. Due to the low penetration rate or IV(e) eligibility of youth in Delaware (32% and falling), total cost for this plan would be \$2.9 million, including federal funds (state share is increasing because of low penetration rate). Medicaid costs are not included in the cost analysis. However, Rep. Barbieri and Amanda Brennan would contend that most youth that are aging out of foster care would receive Medicaid benefits as a result of low income so that is not a new cost to the state.

Model 2

Using the same model and services as the foster care system in place now, the state would contract an outside agency to service the 18-21 population, including housing. The budget was created using the assumption of \$150 a day per older youth or \$55,000 a year per youth. Model 2 would also use as much IV(e) monies as possible. Unfortunately, youth that are placed with DFS contracted homes would have to move to a new home, contracted through the outside agency. Keith estimated that the total cost would be a total cost of about a \$1 million for every 18 youth.

Earlier this year a consultant from Annie E. Casey, Dennis Blazey, an expert in Fostering Connections, helped to go through a fiscal analysis with members of DFS. Through this analysis, it was determined a completely state supported extended care system may be the best option for Delaware. Because of this, Delaware will not have some of the restrictions placed on states that opt into Fostering Connections.

Mary Kate McLaughlin added that she wants to make sure that this is not a system that continues foster care in the same way. She wants the committee to recognize the importance of creating a system that creates young independent adults. Rodney also describes that there are currently youth and young adults utilizing vouchers and other housing help for apartments that we must consider in determining extended care in Delaware.

Felicia Kellum described some states that have already extended foster care to 21. She chose to discuss the completely state funded programs because the committee agrees that federal funding does not warrant the restrictions through Fostering Connections. Through this discussion, the committee agreed that the areas that we would like to start molding are: age limit, eligibility requirements, legal involvement, re-entry, living arrangement, financial assistance/services, case worker/independent living involvement, and philosophy.

Youth Response

Ethan S. discussed how he was getting acquainted with the information provided at this meeting. He will be prepared at the next meeting to discuss what programs he would like to see for older youth partaking in extended care. Amanda Brennan discussed the importance of current and former foster youth from all over the state to participate in this group and urged the independent living providers to each bring one youth with them to the upcoming meetings.

Open Discussion from Workgroup

Nate Badell mentioned the need for a savings incentive program when older youth reach certain benchmarks, like graduation or paying bills on time. Julie Miller explained the Jim Casey Opportunity Passport IDA savings Program and the hope to bolster West End's already existing program. Judge Barbara Crowell then suggested the need for social skills learning. Julie mentioned Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative Transitions working group and their goal of building social capital among older youth. Tasha Warren will bring in a budget from the West End Lifelines Program that currently houses twenty-two youth to help determine costs for housing on a state-wide level. Christina Bey-Jones added that she would like the group to consider developmentally disabled services for older youth and other state's youth moving into Delaware for services when building our extended care system. Keith Zirkle would also like to the group to consider extension of foster care and services might be a disincentive for youth to be adopted and ways to get around this.

Mary Kate McLaughlin closed the discussion by mentioning that money should not constrain the system the group builds. The committee should also consider that phasing in costs can help alleviate a high cost system.

Next Steps

The committee should review what other states are doing, per Felicia Kellum's handout and come to the next meeting with ideas for Delaware's model in the areas of age limit, eligibility requirements, legal involvement, re-entry, living arrangement, financial assistance/services, case worker/independent living involvement, and philosophy.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETINGS –

All meeting will take place at Wilmington and Milford DFS Offices (w/Teleconference):

1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington, DE 19805, Rm. #199

247 Northeast Front Street, Milford, DE 19963, Conf. Rm.

- **Thursday, July 26, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, August 9, 2012 – 4:00 pm**
- **Thursday, August 23, 2012 – 4:00 pm**

- **Thursday, September 6, 2012 – 4:00 pm**